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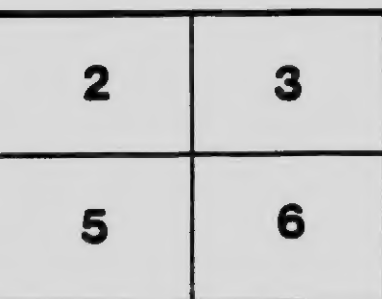
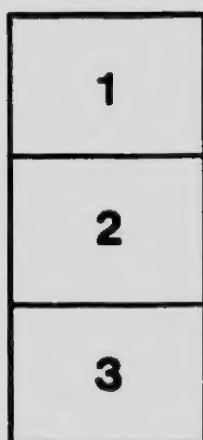
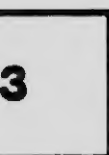
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ADDRESS BY

MOST WOR. BRO. A. T. FREED

At the unveiling of a Monument erected by the
Barton Lodge, No. 6, G.R.C., A.F. & A.M.,
in the Province of Ontario,

to the late

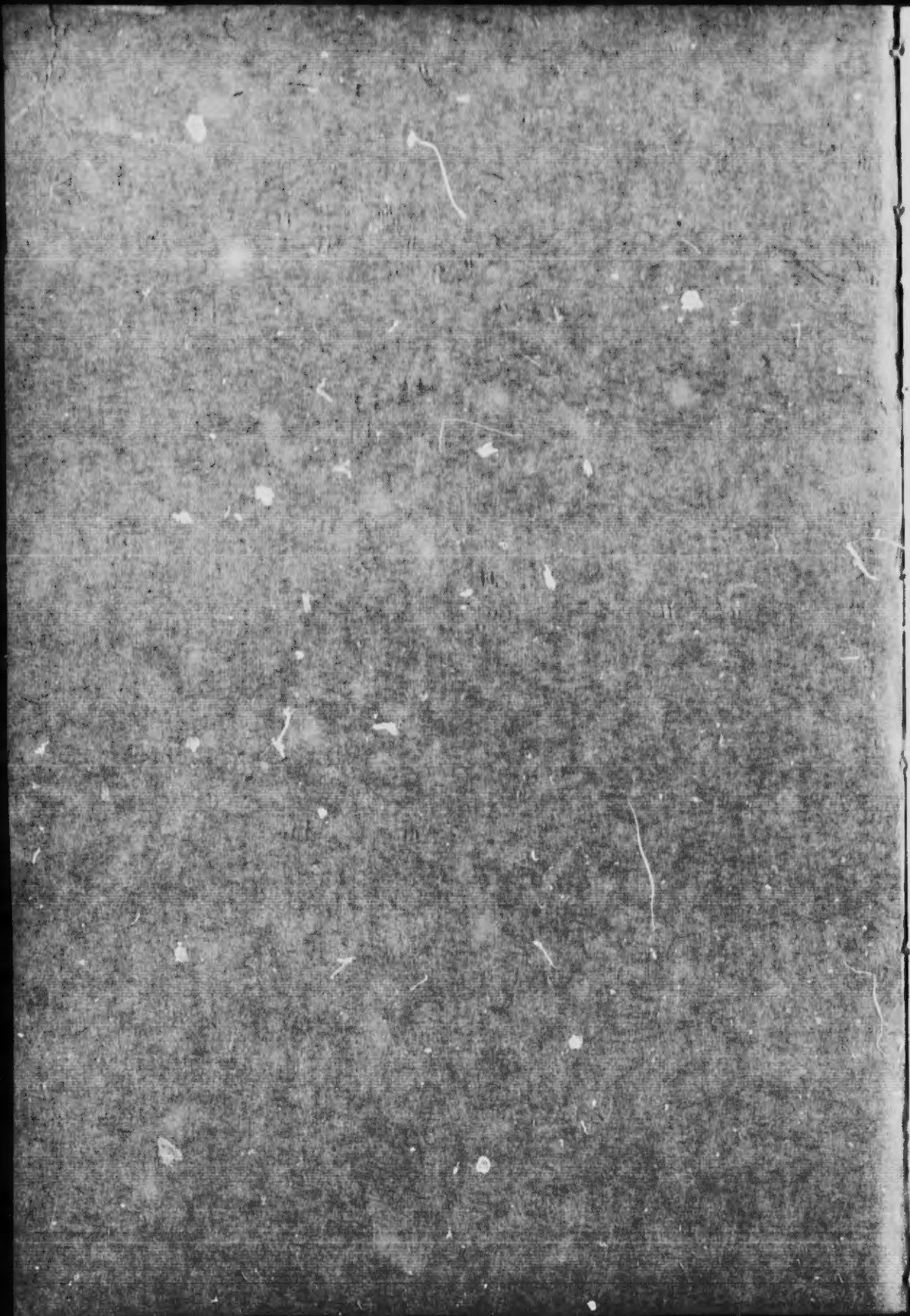
Wor. Bro. Capt. Wm. Johnson Kerr

The Victor of Beaver Dam 1813

At St. Luke's Church, Burlington, Ontario

SUNDAY, JUNE 27th, 1909





ADDRESS BY MOST WOR. BRO. A. T. FREED

Sunday was a day that will occupy a prominent place in the history of Burlington lodge, A. F. & A. M., it having been marked by the annual sermon, in St. Luke's Anglican church, and the unveiling, by Grand Master A. T. Freed, of a monument erected by the members of The Barton lodge of this city, to the memory of Wor. Bro. Capt. William Johnson Kerr, the hero of the Battle of Beaver Dam in 1813. A large number of Masons from the city, including the members of Godfrey de Houllon, Knights Templar, and a large representation of the Barton lodge attended the service and exercises.

The members of the craft assembled at the hall of the Burlington lodge and marched to St. Luke's church in the following order:

Knights Templar.

Representatives of Six Nation Indians.

Visiting brethren from Hamilton, Oakville, Waterdown, Stoney Creek, and Milton.

The Barton lodge.

Burlington lodge.

Grand lodge representatives.

Grand Master Freed.

Long before the hour set for the service, a large congregation had gathered but when the Masons arrived they filled the pretty little church. So that only a few of the outsiders who wished to were able to get inside.

Rev. W. F. Hovey, rector of the church, had charge of the service, and the preacher was Rev. Bro. Canon Abbott, rector of Christ church cathedral, of this city.

As a text, Rev. Canon Abbott took the words: "Then Peter said, silver and gold have I none; but such as I have, give I thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk" (Acts iii; 67). He explained the context of the verse and said that as Peter and John were entering the temple they were accosted and asked for alms, and although they were poor as

he who asked assistance of them, they gave that which was better than money. That, the speaker said, was one of the beautiful pictures of the Scriptures, and the story had its application in every age. He pointed out that the best help in life was not that represented by money. There were, he was pleased to know, the Peters and Pauls of this day, and they were continually touching the spiritual nature of men. The gifts bestowed on man by his fellowman often made the rich man feel that he had not done all by lining his pocket-book, and also made the poor man feel that he was not shut out of loving charity.

Among the things which man might give to his fellow men, and which were more valuable than money were: Ideas, representing knowledge; moral inspiration, which meant new motives; sympathy, which would tide over disaster, and religion. Those, he said, were found in freemasonry, which, though it opened the door of fancy, was filled with facts, and showed emblems of man's duty to man. No true mason could be a bad man, for masonry makes a believer of the scoffer; a pure man of the impure, and a strong man of the weak. The community was the better for freemasonry, for it created purity, manliness, integrity, sobriety, and industriousness. Its sympathy lightened the load resulting from disaster, and its religion accepted Christ as the Saviour, and the mason who was trying to do his duty was a power in his neighborhood.

At the conclusion of the sermon the brethren gathered in the grave-yard, where, in the presence of a vast congregation, Grand Master A. T. Freed unveiled the monument erected by The Barton lodge to Wor. Bro. Capt. William Johnson Kerr. Before doing so, however, he expressed his pleasure at the presence of representatives of the Six Nation Indians, whose forefathers fought so valiantly at the Battle of Beaver Dam.

Addressing the assembly, he said:

"At our feet lie the remains of William Johnson Kerr, of his wife and his children. They have rested peacefully here for many years, but no memorial stone has till now been erected to tell the passer-by whose graves these are, nor what they did who occupy them. Recently the members of the Barton lodge, No. 6, of Freemasons decided to mark the spot, because Captain Kerr was a member and past master of their lodge, and because he rendered important service, not only to Masonry, but to his king and his country.

"William Johnson Kerr was a relative of Sir John Johnson, who took a very prominent part on the royal side in the war of the American revolution. He married a sister of Joseph Brant, and was, by lineage and by marriage, drawn to the defense of his country in her hour of danger. At the breaking out of the war of 1812 he was given command of the warriors of the Six Nations Indians; and with them he participated in many of the conflicts of that war down to the battle of Chippewa. In that battle he was taken prisoner, and remained in captivity till the end of the war.

"The Barton lodge of Freemasons was formed in 1795. In 1812, on the breaking out of the war, many of its members offered their services to their country, and owing to their absence and to the unsettled condition of the country, the meetings of the lodge were interrupted. When the war was over conditions had changed. The grand body from which the lodge had received its warrant had formed a union with the original grand lodge of England, and it was uncertain whether or not the body had a legal existence as a Masonic lodge. The brethren met; they elected officers; they exercised all the powers of a Masonic lodge, except that they refrained from making Masons. They endeavored to get a new warrant from the grand lodge of England, but there was delay and seeming neglect on the part of grand lodge officers. In this emergency Worshipful Brother Kerr took up the matter with his accustomed energy and perseverance, with the result that, in 1844, the new warrant was issued, and the Barton lodge was numbered 733 on the grand registry of England.

"But while the members of the Barton lodge are deeply interested in the service of Captain Kerr to their lodge, Canadians generally are more deeply interested in his military service, and particularly with the conflict at

Beaver Dam, at which he commanded the Indians who alone fought the battle and won the victory.

"In 1812 the United States declared war against Great Britain. Undoubtedly the republic had some cause for complaint; but the real object of the war, openly avowed in the press, on the platform, and in congress, was the conquest of Canada. Great Britain was engaged in a death struggle with Napoleon, and it was believed that she would be quite unable to defend her American possessions against the armies, numbering half a million men, raised by the republic, and hurled against the thin and scattered populations of these provinces. But the few regular troops in Canada acquitted themselves nobly; the men of Canada sprang to arms in defence of their homes and their liberties; and the Indians gallantly marched to the aid of their white brethren. At Mackinaw, at Detroit, at Queenston, at Chateaugay, at Lacolle, at Stoney Creek, at Beaver Dam, at Lundy's Lane, and on many another hard-fought field, the invaders were hurled back, and when, at the intercession of the emperor of Russia, Great Britain granted peace to the republic, there was not a soldier of the United States in Canada, save those who languished in its prisons or flumbered beneath its soil. The armies of the republic were baffled and beaten back, its treasury was bankrupt, and its national flag had ceased to wave on the ocean.

"Among the first to take up arms was William Johnson Kerr. He took command of the Indians of the Six Nations, and was engaged in nearly all the battles along the Niagara frontier. His chief exploit, however, was the defeat of Col. Boerstler at Beaver Dam, which led to the surrender of that officer and his whole command.

"On the 23rd of June, 1813, Lieut. Fitzgibbon, with fifty regular troops, was stationed at DeCew's house, near the spot at present occupied by the power house of the Cataract Power company; Major DeHaren was at St. Catharines, with several hundred men; Col. Bishop was at or near Jordan, and General Vincent was in command of the district, with headquarters at Hamilton, then known as "The Head of the Lake." Captain Kerr and his force of Indians was at the Beaver Dam, about two miles east of the position of Lieut. Fitzgibbon. United States troops, in strong force, occupied the whole of the Niagara frontier, their headquarters being the town of Newark, now Niagara-on-the-Lake. This army was too strong to be openly assailed by the meager forces of Gen. Vincent, but detached parties watched

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the enemy's lines, cut off his marauding parties and gave him such annoyance that it was resolved to attempt reprisals. One of these was to be the capture or destruction of Lieut. Fitzgibbon's command at DeCew's. On the evening of June 23 Col. Boerstler was ordered to take command of an expeditionary force consisting of the 14th regular infantry, with detachments from other infantry regiments, a squadron of cavalry, two field guns, and a company of New York militia, the whole numbering between 700 and 800 men. It was intended that the movement should be absolutely secret and the attack a complete surprise. This intention was frustrated through the heroism of Mrs. Laura Secord, who accidentally learned of the intended attack, and who successfully made her way through the lines of the enemy, past bands of Indians, and through lonely woods, to apprise Lieut. Fitzgibbon of his danger. The story of Laura Secord has been so well told by Mrs. Curzon, by William Kirby, and others, and is so well known to Canadians generally, that it would not be necessary to repeat it here, even were the time to do so at my disposal.

The expeditionary force under Col. Boerstler left Niagara toward evening on the 23rd of June, bivouacked at Queenston that night, and started for its objective point early in the morning of the 24th. When it had arrived within about two miles of DeCew's it was assailed by the Indians, under Capt. Kerr. This force was composed of 203 warriors of the Six Nations and Caughnawagas, and nearly 100 Ottawa. Capt. Kerr was in command of the whole force, with John Brant as his lieutenant. The Caughnawagas were under command of Capt. Ducharme, a gallant French-Canadian, who acted most admirably throughout the engagement. One-half of the Indians attacked the enemy in front, while the other half circled round to the rear, so that the United States troops faced both ways and fought in two directions. The infantry fired at random into the woods, whence the shots of the Indians came or where their war-whoop was heard; the dragoons dashed into the thick bush, only to be driven back by the withering fire; the artillery thundered among the trees, doing little execution, for the Indians were invisible. The tactics of the Indians were very simple. They would make a desperate attack upon one quarter of the enemy's position; then, withdrawing, would quickly circle round through the woods, and as desperately attack from another quarter. Thus, Col. Boerstler was led to believe that

their numbers were very great. The fight lasted about three hours. Gradually the enemy had been forced back, till he occupied a hollow, with a swamp in his rear, and the Indians were pressing upon him from all other sides. The commanding officer and a number of his captains had been wounded, about 100 men were dead or wounded, the artillery ammunition was nearly spent, and the troops were reduced to a state of terror, when Col. Boerstler raised a flag of truce.

"At this moment Lieut. Fitzgibbon appeared upon the scene with his company of regulars, and, making a quick and accurate survey of the situation, sent an officer to demand the surrender of the enemy. After some parleying, the demand was complied with, and the whole of the enemy's force surrendered, except a few who had skulked off through the woods and escaped.

"Too much praise cannot be given to Lieut. Fitzgibbon for his adroitness in concealing the numbers of the men under his command and securing the unconditional surrender of a greatly superior force; but it must not be forgotten that the whole of the fighting was done by Capt. Kerr's Indians, and that the battle was over when Lieut. Fitzgibbon appeared upon the scene.

"The fight at Beaver Dam had an important bearing upon the result of the war, and materially contributed to the final victory. To Captain Kerr and his brave Indians must be given due meed of praise. His name should be kept in remembrance by all Canadian Masons who love their craft, and by all sons of Canada who love their country.

"The thunder of the guns has died away, and the hatreds and jealousies of the last century are silenced with it. The citizen of the United States passes with indifference over fields where his ancestors strove to conquer Canada. The blue waves of Ontario carry only the freightage of commerce and the luxurious tourist where then it carried hostile navies. From the heights near the Beaver Dam one may look down upon smiling meadows and fruitful vineyards, with fields that promise corn and wine. Near the scene of the conflict of which I have spoken the falling waters generate power which, transmitted to distant towns and cities, gives light to the people and turns the wheels of busy industry. 'The old order changeth, giving place to new,' and we no longer fear that fratricidal strife shall array our brethren of the great republic against

this fair Dominion. Nevertheless, it is proper that we should remember the heroic deeds and the great sacrifices of our fathers—what they did and what they suffered in order that they might hand down to us a heritage of freedom and the dower of empire. Their acts should be inscribed upon the brightest page of our history, and their names should be written high among the names of those whom Canadians delight to honor. Not least among the notable patriots of those days was William Johnson Kerr. His patriotism and loyalty incited him to lofty deeds, and his victory of Beaver Dam was material to the success of the cause for which he staked his life, and by which we hold the heritage of this great Dominion.

"As a slight memorial to this brave and true man—this sterling patriot and good Mason—the members of The Barton lodge have erected this stone; and, as their representative, I now unveil it to the world."

As he uttered the last words Grand

Master Freed untied the cords which held the Union Jack, and as it fell to the ground the beautiful stone was exposed to view.

Rev. F. W. Hovey offered prayer, and the singing of Lead, Kindly Light and the grand honors to the grand master brought the exercises to a close.

The gathering included Lieut.-Col. E. E. W. Moore and Major Ross, representing the Thirteenth regiment, Lieut. George V. Taylor of the Fourth Field Battery, all the masters of the city Masonic lodges, P.D.D.G.M. Bro. Dr. McGregor of Waterdown, and P.D.D.G.M. Bro. Dr. C. V. Emory.

Rt. Wor. Bro. John Hoodless acted as master of ceremonies.

The stone bore the following inscription:

"In memory of Captain William J. Kerr, the victor of Beaver Dam, June 24, 1812. W. M., The Barton lodge, A., F. and A. M. Erected by the brethren of the Barton lodge, Hamilton, Ontario."



